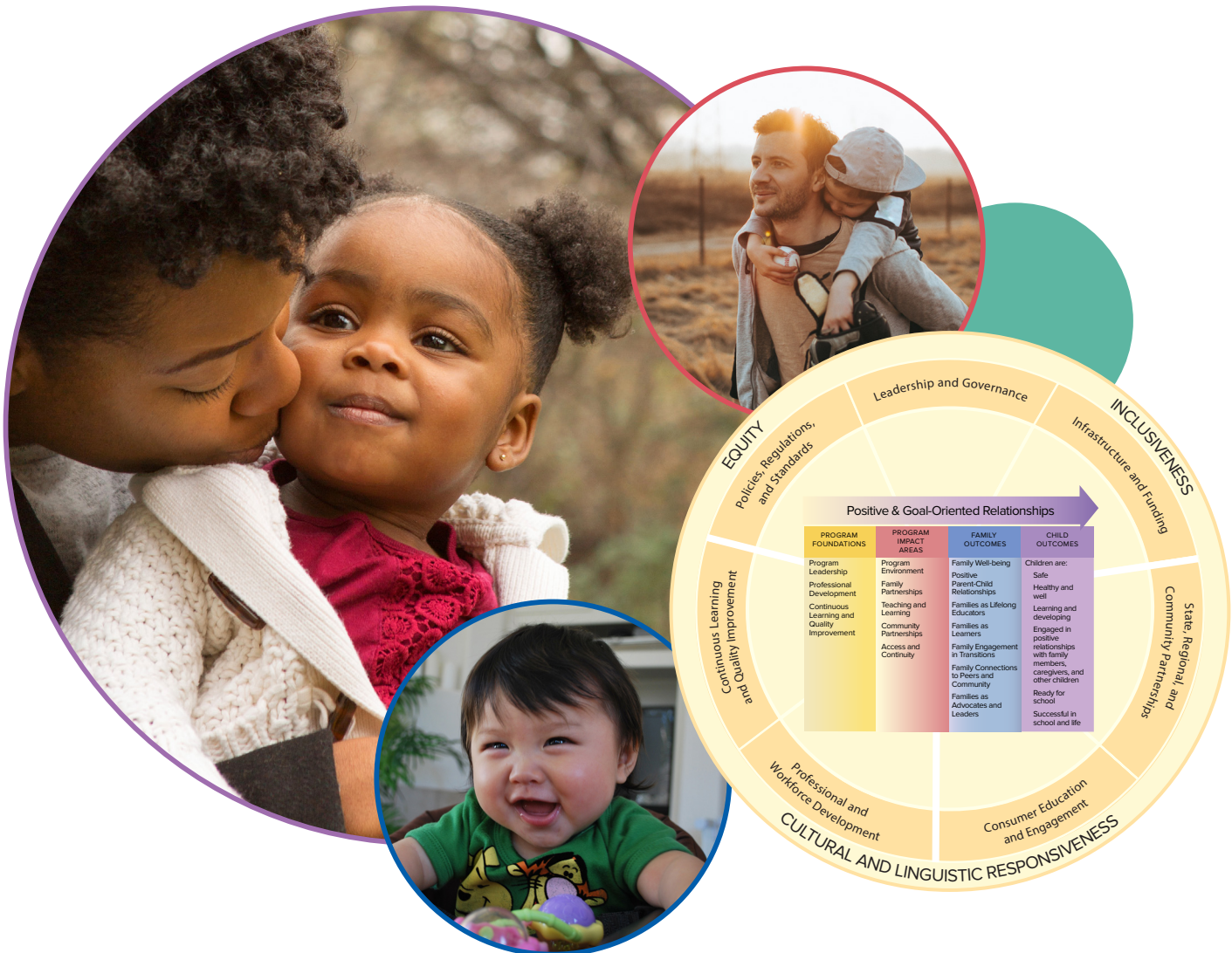# Using the Parent, Family, and Community Engagement Framework for Early Childhood Systems to Improve Quality

A Systemic Approach for Administrators and Leaders in States, Territories, and Tribes

Acknowledgments

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For more information about this resource,
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https://childcareta.acf.hhs.gov/centers/national-center-parent-family-and-community-engagement

ADMINISTRATION FOR
CHILDREN & FAMILIES

NATIONAL CENTER ON
Parent, Family and Community Engagement

Early Childhood
National Centers

Introduction

Wondering how to strengthen family engagement in early childhood systems in States, Territories, and Tribes? Explore this resource to learn about the **Parent, Family, and Community Engagement Framework for Early Childhood Systems** and the **Key Indicators of High Quality Family Engagement** to support high-quality family engagement in early childhood systems.

The goal of the Framework—and of this guide—is to promote positive, enduring change for children, families, and communities. This guide highlights opportunities within components of an early childhood system to coordinate strategies intended to strengthen outcomes for children, families and programs. Leaders and agency administrators of States, Territories, Tribes, and communities; early childhood professionals; families; and other decision-makers may find this resource useful to support their work to align parent, family, and community engagement with the Child Care and Development Fund Final Rule.

This resource is part of a series designed to support efforts to implement the PFCE Framework for Early Childhood Systems in early childhood systems-building efforts (see page 15).

Key Terms

We use the terms "professional" and "provider" to represent all professionals who work with children and families.

"Early childhood system" refers to a set of systems that seek to improve families' access to the range of supports that enable all young children to thrive. These systems include the infrastructure related to program services and support for children's health, early childhood education and care (including early intervention and Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA), Part B supports for children with developmental delays or disabilities), and family support.

"System building" refers to the ongoing process of developing, improving, and coordinating the structures and services that contribute to positive results for young children, families, and their communities.

We use the term "early care and education programs" to refer to child care, prekindergarten, and Head Start and Early Head Start settings.

"Early childhood settings" include early care and education settings as well as early intervention, pediatric, and other types of settings that support child development.

We use the terms "parent" and "family" to refer to biological parents, adoptive parents, and step-parents, as well as primary caregivers, such as grandparents, other adult family members, and foster parents. Parents include pregnant women and expectant families.

Families can be biological or nonbiological, chosen or circumstantial. They are connected through cultures, languages, traditions, shared experiences, emotional commitment, and mutual support.

Using This Resource

In this resource, we discuss ways to use the PFCE Framework and the set of eight Key Indicators of high-quality family engagement to contribute to positive outcomes for children and families. The PFCE Framework and the Key Indicators can be used together to inform a shared understanding of family engagement among early childhood leaders, decision-makers, professionals, families, and other stakeholders.

There are many actions that leaders in States, Territories, and Tribes can take to promote family engagement in their early childhood systems. These leaders can identify actions within each System Component of the PFCE Framework for Early Childhood Systems guided by the Key Indicators to promote high-quality family engagement. Early childhood leaders can implement these actions as part of systemic, integrated, and comprehensive approaches to family engagement such that:

- All early childhood systems components and program elements specified in the PFCE Framework for Early Childhood Systems have a role to play in promoting PFCE.

- All parts of systems and programs achieve better PFCE results by working together.

- Early childhood systems are designed to respond holistically to the full range of strengths, interests, and needs of children and families within the contexts of their communities.

Child Care Development Fund (CCDF) Administrators in States, Territories, and Tribes can use the PFCE Framework for Early Childhood Systems and the Key Indicators to help review and prioritize family engagement within their own scopes of responsibility. CCDF Administrators can also use these resources to guide collaborations with partners and stakeholders to promote family engagement system-wide.

Administrators can use these resources in several ways, including to:
- Develop a vision of family engagement for a State, Territory, or Tribe and create a system-wide strategic implementation plan

- Address federal requirements under the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) Act of 2014 and the Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) Final Rule

- Identify other opportunities to pursue administrative, regulatory, and legislative policies to encourage changes in program-level practice

- Design professional development, training, and technical assistance for early childhood education and care professionals

- Provide guidance for systems of continuous learning and quality improvement.

Explore the next section to learn more about family engagement, the PFCE Framework for Early Childhood Systems, and the Key Indicators of High-Quality Family Engagement.

What Is Family Engagement?

Family engagement is essential to high-quality services for all children in early childhood care and education. From the beginning of life, families nurture their children and the capacities they will need to be ready for school.

Family engagement is an interactive process through which staff, parents, families, and their children build positive and goal-oriented relationships. It is a shared responsibility of families and professionals. This responsibility requires mutual respect for the roles and strengths each has to offer.

Family engagement means doing with—not doing to or for—families. Staff work together with families, other professionals, and community partners in ways that promote equity, inclusiveness, and cultural and linguistic responsiveness.

What the Research Says

From the beginning of life, families nurture the capacities that children will need to be successful in school and in life. Professionals can play an important role as partners along the way.

Families' knowledge, skills, and practices can help them make progress toward their goals, support children's development, and improve children's life outcomes and family well-being (National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, 2015; NCPFCE, 2014; National Research Council and Institute of Medicine, 2000; Zaslow & Martinez-Beck, 2006).

Parent-child relationships and family well-being are both powerful predictors of children's long-term development, learning, social experiences, health, and well-being (Anda et al., 2006; National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, 2015; National Research Council & Institute of Medicine, 2000).

When parents are engaged with their children's learning, children are more likely to have better outcomes (Van Voorhis, Maier, Epstein, & Lloyd, 2013).

What is the PFCE Framework for Early Childhood Systems?

The **PFCE Framework for Early Childhood Systems** is a research-based guide to understanding the collaborative relationship between parents and early childhood systems, programs, providers, family caregivers, and community service providers to promote positive, enduring change for children, families, and communities.

**Parent, Family and Community Engagement
Framework for Early Childhood Systems**
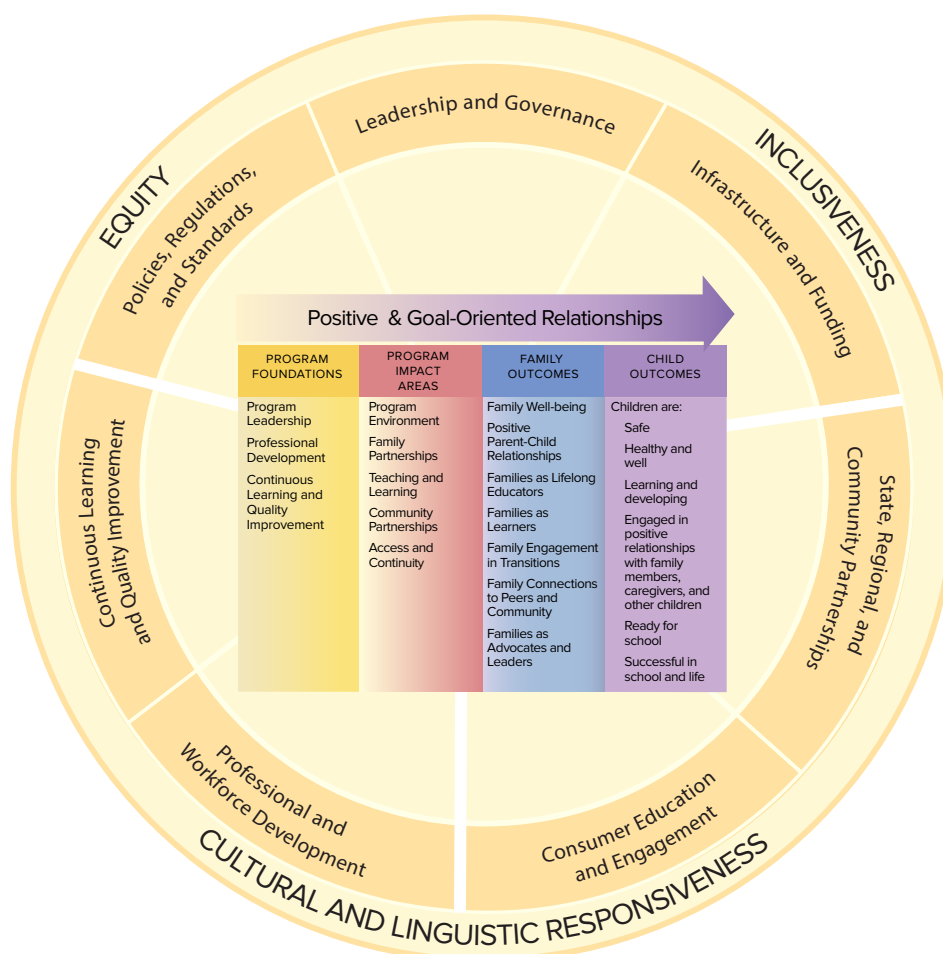
At the systems level, the **PFCE Framework for Early Childhood Systems** provides a vision for integrating family engagement across the intersecting components of early childhood systems. At the program level, the Framework specifies the elements that can be coordinated to make progress toward child and family outcomes. The Framework identifies equity, inclusiveness, cultural and linguistic responsiveness, and positive goal-oriented relationships as important drivers for these outcomes.

> See the **PFCE Framework for Early Childhood Systems**, available on the Child Care Technical Assistance website.

What are the Key Indicators of High-Quality Family Engagement?

The eight Key Indicators of high quality-family engagement focus on how programs and professionals approach relationships with families and how families experience these interactions. The Key Indicators are intended to be used as a set to strengthen parent-child relationships in support of children's health, learning, and development.

The eight Key Indicators were identified through an extensive review of recent family engagement literature and state examples and in consultation with parents and other experts.

The Key Indicators promote continued attention to the importance of including family engagement in early childhood systems-building efforts. See a description of each of the Key Indicators on page 16.

The Key Indicators are:

1 **Ensuring Providers' Knowledge of Child and Family Development and Family Engagement Practices**

2 **Ensuring Providers' Family-Specific Knowledge**

3 **Fostering Positive, Two-Way Communication**

4 **Creating Program Environments That Encourage Family Engagement**

5 **Providing Peer-to-Peer Activities and Other Social Networking Opportunities**

6 **Fostering Respect, Flexibility, and Openness to Change**

7 **Promoting Parents' Sense of Competence**

8 **Advocating for Families and Making Connections to Supports and Resources**

See the **Key Indicators of High-Quality Family Engagement for Quality Rating and Improvement Systems**, available on the Child Care Technical Assistance website.

Using the Parent, Family, and Community Engagement Framework
for Early Childhood Systems to Improve Quality

Using the Key Indicators in Early Childhood Systems Components

Explore this section to identify how early childhood leaders can use the Key Indicators within each of the System Components of the PFCE Framework for Early Childhood systems to promote family engagement.

Leadership and Governance

Opportunities exist for CCDF Administrators to raise awareness among other leaders in the early childhood system about the importance of parent, family, and community engagement. CCDF Administrators in States, Territories, and Tribes and their colleagues can use these tools within existing collaborative governance and planning efforts.

In these instances, the eight Key Indicators can be used to develop a shared vision for systemic family engagement. This vision can be integrated into strategic planning opportunities (such as those led by Early Childhood Advisory Councils in States, Territories, or Tribes), CCDF Plan development and revisions, and other decision-making processes.

CCDF Administrators and their partners can use the eight Key Indicators to frame messages about what family engagement should look like in early care and education (ECE) programs as well as in other services for young children and their families. They can identify opportunities to build commitment and broad agreement among individuals with leadership and authority to strengthen family engagement policy, systems, and practice.

Policies, Regulations, and Standards

Program-level practice is influenced by several elements: eligibility policies, quality standards, licensing rules, and other legislative and administrative requirements. Early childhood system leaders can look for existing policy opportunities to emphasize parent, family, and community engagement as a priority. These policies may exist at many levels: federal, State, Territory, Tribe and local.
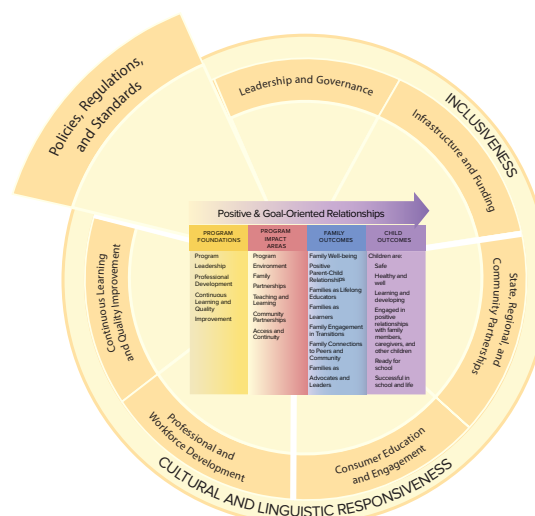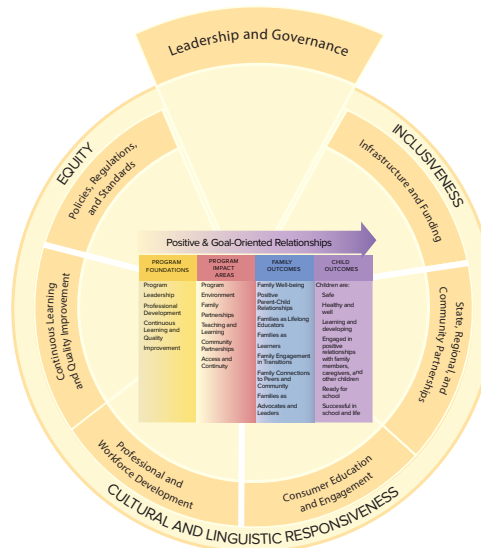
For example, state licensing policies require ECE programs and providers to meet certain minimum standards of care to operate. Child Care Administrators can look for opportunities to revise licensing standards and policies in ways that support the implementation of the Key Indicators of high-quality family engagement. Licensing changes could apply to center-based child care, family child care homes, prekindergarten programs, and other early childhood care and education settings and professions. These opportunities also could include:

- Specific family engagement standards (for example, feasible minimal time requirements for parent-provider contact)

- Incentives to strive for higher parent, family, and community engagement-related standards than those contained in current licensing requirements. Incentives could include reduced licensing fees, increased subsidy payments, cash or material payments, special recognitions, endorsements, or badges

- Education and training that focuses on parent, family, and community engagement for early childhood education and care staff in general, or staff at a particular level (administrators for example), in order for licensure to be granted.

Existing requirements by the federal government, States, Territories, and Tribes also present opportunities to promote coordination and collaboration across programs and services. For example, there are requirements under CCDBG that mandate referrals for child development services and for health screenings, as well as requirements for screenings for developmental delay (as required by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)).

The CCDF Plan for a State, Territory, or Tribe is another vehicle for setting administrative policies that promote family engagement. Provisions related to consumer education, workforce development, and the quality set-aside dollars may offer particular opportunities to promote family engagement.

See **Crosswalk: 2016 Child Care and Development Fund Final Rule and the Parent, Family, and Community Engagement Framework for Early Childhood Systems** to learn how key provisions of the CCDF Final Rule align to the system-level elements of the PFCE Framework for Early Childhood Systems. This resource is available on the Child Care Technical Assistance web site.

Finally, most states already have categories, standards, and embedded indicators in their QRIS systems regarding family engagement. Updates and reviews of these sections offer opportunities for states to consider using the eight Key Indicators to revise and extend existing standards.

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Alignment with Other Family Engagement Frameworks and Indicators

Most States and some Territories and Tribes have already been working to integrate a focus on family engagement into their early childhood systems using evidence-informed conceptual frameworks, such as the Strengthening Families Protective Factors Framework. Some states have developed their own Family Engagement Frameworks or other types of guidance. These frameworks are informed by the same or similar bodies of research.

The eight Key Indicators of high-quality family engagement, therefore, are likely to align with what has already been developed in states. These indicators can be used in concert to further support programs and professionals in contributing to positive outcomes for young children. The Key Indicators take the earlier frameworks a step further by applying the most current research on effective family engagement to the full range of system components in early childhood systems.

</div>

Infrastructure and Funding

An agencies' infrastructure, including its fiscal resources and policies, can affect how quickly the Key Indicators can be implemented and how well the indicators inform and shape program-level practice. Early childhood system leaders can use CCDF quality set-aside dollars or other resources as incentives for programs to adopt parent, family, and community engagement practices and policies in early childhood programs and services.
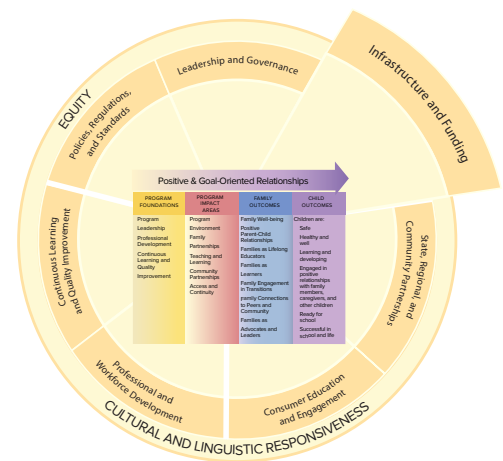
CCDF Administrators in States, Territories, and Tribes can find opportunities to issue grants and contracts for training and technical assistance (for example, Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) contracts) or for delivering other early childhood programs and services that include specific family engagement requirements (for example, community partnerships, consumer education, and staff training).

States, Territories, and Tribes receive federal monies to invest in ECE. Their general funds, however, can often be used above and beyond what the federal government specifies. For example, in some states, legislatures have authorized the expansion of certain programs (e.g., CCDF, QRIS, and other child- and family-focused programs) to better support ECE.

States, Territories, and Tribes can use these funding mechanisms to:

- Enhance and expand such programs as child care, prekindergarten, Early Head Start, and Head Start by including family engagement programming and, when feasible, hiring staff to support PFCE practices

- Provide incentives for ECE programs to implement family engagement policies and programs (especially programs that enroll children and families that receive Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), CCDF, or other federal monies)

States, Territories, and Tribes can also use their authority to set standards and work closely with programs to reach agreements that allow them to blend different funding streams in ways that support the family engagement practices described in the eight Key Indicators.

> Major sources of federal monies used to fund early care and education systems include: Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF); Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF); Head Start and Early Head Start; Maternal, Infant, and Child Home Visiting; Individuals with Disabilities Education Act; and Child and the Maternal and Child Health Block Grants (MCHBG).

Professional Development and Workforce

Early childhood professionals effectively engage parents, families, and communities when they are guided by a shared understanding of the competencies needed to fully engage families. Early childhood system leaders in States, Territories, and Tribes can use the **Relationship-Based Competencies to Support Family Engagement Series (RBCs)** to build a high-quality early childhood workforce that has the skills, knowledge, and competencies to implement the eight Key Indicators of family engagement in ECE programs.

Specifically, leaders in States, Territories, and Tribes can use the RBCs to:

- Develop strategic plans to enhance the development of the early childhood workforce

- Form new partnerships or strengthen existing partnerships with colleges and universities to include family engagement in educational opportunities

- Help make decisions about the use of existing resources to promote family engagement

- Develop systems and an infrastructure to support collaboration among community partners

- Coordinate family engagement efforts across early childhood initiatives and systems
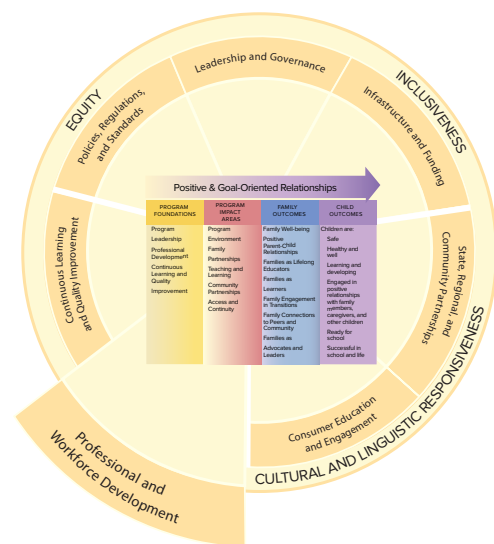
Relationship-Based Competencies to Support Family Engagement Series

Learn more about the knowledge, skills, and individual practices that early childhood professionals need to engage families effectively in positive, goal-oriented relationships. These competencies are based on research and recommended practice across many fields working with families, from pregnancy through the early childhood years.

The relationship-based competencies (RBCs) are consistent with specific state core knowledge and competencies for early childhood professionals and other preparation resources for the early childhood workforce. The competencies can reinforce and extend efforts across states to increase family engagement in early childhood programs. The RBCs are aligned with the 2016 Child Care and Development Fund Final Rule.

For more information, visit the Child Care Technical Assistance web site.

The RBCs can inform an array of resources, training, coaching sessions, and other supports for individuals in the full range of roles in all sectors of the early childhood system. Input from families and front line workers along with data on the strengths and needs of early childhood professionals can provide guidance for systemwide action.

Early childhood system leaders can then establish appropriate requirements for standardized training based on the RBCs for the full range of roles in early childhood settings. These requirements can be incorporated into professional certification, licensure and continuing education standards, program licensure requirements, and QRIS requirements.

Leaders in States, Territories, and Tribes can include family engagement information in technical assistance activities, materials, and resources. When these leaders coordinate their offerings, they extend the reach of scarce, critical resources. They can also work closely with higher education, CCR&Rs, and other organizations that provide professional support. With this kind of collaboration, family engagement curricula and training content for early childhood professionals can be aligned with the Key Indicators before and after these professionals enter the field.

Continuous Learning and Quality Improvement

Early childhood systems in States, Territories, and Tribes that incorporate continuous learning and quality improvement as a core function ensure that decisions made throughout the system are data-driven, apply lessons from past efforts, and contribute to desired outcomes for children and families.

These kinds of efforts can also ensure that continuous learning and quality improvement processes engage families as full partners. Finally, they can ensure that these processes specifically promote the adoption of the Key Indicators for family engagement at the program level.
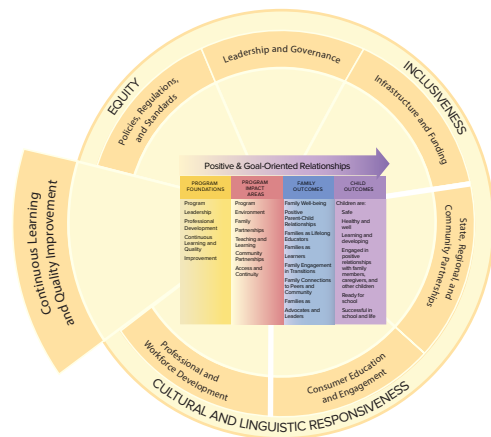
> Some states already require programs to complete a family engagement self-assessment and use the results to develop a continuous improvement action plan. For example, Indiana has developed its own Early Childhood Family Engagement Toolkit. Washington State's Early Achievers QRIS uses the Strengthening Families™ Self-Assessment Tool for Center-based Early Care and Education Programs or the Strengthening Families™ Self-Assessment Tool for Family Child Care Programs.

Programs need access to reliable and comprehensive data in order to know whether Key Indicators for family engagement have been implemented, and with what level of quality. Collecting and using data often require significant changes in program culture and practices. One of these changes may involve engaging families in the continuous improvement process.

Insufficient resources, tools, and motivation can hinder efforts to bolster data use. Some ways that States, Territories, and Tribes can address these challenges include:

- Encouraging the collection of uniform family engagement measures and similar reporting requirements across programs, including national and local initiatives as well as those by States, Territories, and Tribe

- Adopting a core set of parent, family, and community engagement quality measures that are aligned with priority outcome goals within programs and the early childhood system

- Working collaboratively with families, programs, community partners, and regulatory and accreditation agencies to create systems that collect, analyze, and review family engagement data as part of routine program operations

- Providing incentives to collect, report, and use parent, family, and community engagement data.

Using the Parent, Family, and Community Engagement Framework for Early Childhood Systems to Improve Quality

State, Regional and Community Partnerships

Partnerships across multiple sectors and at every level are essential for a fully functioning early childhood system that is responsive to and effectively engages all communities, families, and their children. States, Territories, and Tribes establish policies that impact young children and their families in many departments and offices, including education, child welfare, health and public health, and mental health.

At the community level, practices must be aligned, services coordinated, and linkages created in order for families and children to get what they need in a timely way. Local practices that influence essential services—such as transportation, food, law enforcement, and responses to interpersonal violence—can significantly affect the lives of young children as well as adults. Engaging all partners to create to a consistent and coordinated system of services and practices is vital to supporting children's healthy development.

The eight Key Indicators for family engagement offer a tangible tool to build connections with partners using a shared vision and common language. Effective family engagement strategies for ECE programs may also apply to a range of other programs and potential partners in the early childhood system. The eight Key Indicators can inform cross-partner conversations about fostering positive, two-way communication and strengthening relationships with families. They can help align practices so that families experience seamless, supportive interactions with service providers throughout the community.

Consumer Education and Engagement

The eight Key Indicators for family engagement align with and support the guiding principles of the CCDBG Act and the CCDF Final Rule. These principles address parental choice, informed decisions about services, improved quality of services, increased participation in high-quality programs for children from families with low incomes, and high-quality ECE services that are coordinated to maximize parents' options and support upward family economic mobility.
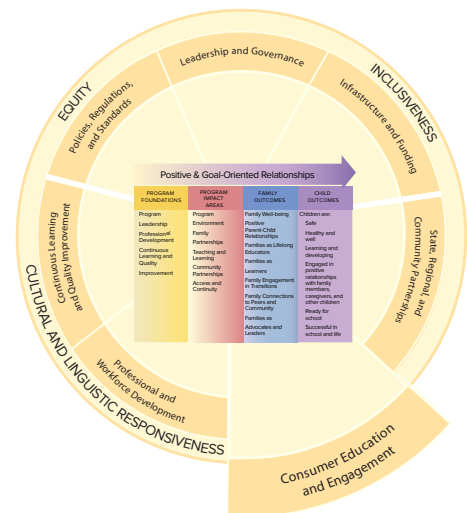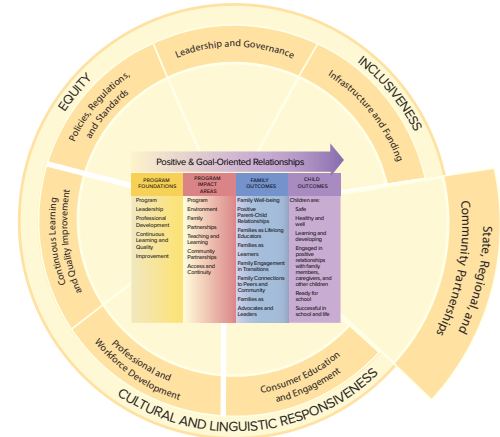
By implementing the Key Indicators, States, Territories, and Tribes can consistently provide the required consumer education statements to eligible parents, the general public, and child care providers. Some of the required consumer education topics include:

- The availability of child care services, financial assistance, and any other services provided through CCDF and funds from States, Territories, or Tribes

- Information about programs for which families receiving CCDF services may be eligible (for example, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF); Head Start and Early Head Start; Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP); Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP); Women, Infants, and Children Food and Nutrition Service (WIC); Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP); and Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP)

- Information about programs for children with disabilities carried out under IDEA, Part B, Section 619 and Part C

- Research and exemplary practices on children's development—for example, social-emotional development, family engagement, and physical health and development

- Policies of States, Territories, and Tribes on the social-emotional and behavioral health of children—for example, models of positive behavioral intervention and support to prevent the suspension and expulsion of children birth to age 5 in child care and other early childhood programs, and policies in support of these models

- Developmental screenings, including referrals and services provided under Medicaid and IDEA, and information about how families can obtain a screening for their child

Closing Thoughts

The eight Key Indicators of high-quality family engagement can be used within the Systems Components of the PFCE Framework to promote continued attention to the importance of including family engagement in early childhood systems-building efforts. By prioritizing family engagement across service sectors, early childhood leaders can ultimately promote lasting positive outcomes for children and families.

Early childhood system leaders in States, Territories, and Tribes can choose to use these two resources in flexible ways in response to the context and circumstances of their systems, communities, program settings, and families. Examples of how the PFCE Framework and Key Indicators can be used to develop a systemic approach to family engagement include:

- Building a shared understanding among stakeholders of quality family engagement

- Informing policy changes that support early childhood systems and programs to recognize the unique strengths and interests of families

- Strengthening measurement and quality assurance processes for family engagement

- Helping governing bodies and parent groups implement effective family engagement strategies

- Modeling and implementing high-quality partnership practices across service sectors

- Guiding consumer education and engagement efforts that are aligned with family engagement

- Designing professional development, training, and technical assistance for early childhood professionals about family engagement

- Working with child care licensing to revise or enhance regulations and program monitoring.

States, Territories, and Tribes can apply the PFCE Framework and Key Indicators thoughtfully to promote a comprehensive approach to family engagement. This kind of approach will support early childhood systems in responding to the full range of strengths, interests, and needs of the children and families they serve.

Related Resources Available on the Child Care Technical Assistance Web Site

Explore the **PFCE Framework for Early Childhood Systems Series**

- Parent, Family, and Community Engagement Framework for Early Childhood Systems

- Parent, Family, and Community Engagement Framework for Early Childhood Systems: Action and Implementation Guide

- Parent, Family, and Community Engagement Framework for Early Childhood Systems: Assessment Workbook

- Parent, Family, and Community Engagement Framework for Early Childhood Systems: A Sample State Scenario

- Crosswalk: 2016 Child Care and Development Fund Final Rule and the Parent, Family, and Community Engagement Framework for Early Childhood Systems

You may also use the following resources to support your work to promote family engagement in your early childhood system.

- **Key Indicators of High-Quality Family Engagement**

- **Relationship-Based Competencies to Support Family Engagement Series**

  o Relationship-Based Competencies to Support Family Engagement: Overview for Early Childhood Professionals

  o Relationship-Based Competencies to Support Family Engagement: A Guide for Early Childhood Professionals Who Work with Children in Group Settings

  o Relationship-Based Competencies to Support Family Engagement: A Guide for Early Childhood Professionals Who Work with Families

  o Relationship-Based Competencies to Support Family Engagement: A Guide for Early Childhood Professionals Who Make Home Visits

- **Foundations for Quality Series**

  o Consumer Engagement: Orientation for Early Childhood and School-Age Care and Education Professionals

  o Consumer Engagement: Strategies for Engaging Families

  o Consumer Education Websites: A Guide to Creating a Family-Friendly Experience and Assessment Tool

  o Consumer Engagement: Using Social Media to Engage Families

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Using the Parent, Family, and Community Engagement Framework
for Early Childhood Systems to Improve Quality

Additional Resource: Key Indicators of High-Quality Family Engagement Descriptions

1 **Ensuring Providers' Knowledge of Child and Family Development andFamily Engagement Practices**

Strengthening family engagement practices requires that program staff and family child care providers understand why family engagement is important, as well as how to make necessary changes to enhance practices. When professionals ground their practice in knowledge about child and family development and family engagement, they can build stronger partnerships with families and improve child outcomes. These efforts include strategies and skills for building relationships with families and partnering in ways that are respectful and culturally and linguistically responsive.

2 **Ensuring Providers' Family-Specific Knowledge**

To be able to engage fully with families, early childhood providers learn about the cultures of the families they work with, the contexts in which they live, and their goals and aspirations for their children and themselves (Forry, et al., 2012). Providers can be culturally and linguistically responsive when they have specific insights about families. Providers and programs can also serve as a resource and refer families to community resources, where appropriate. Family-specific knowledge is particularly important for families that are isolated or face unique challenges or barriers to quality early childhood and other services (Moodie & Ramos, 2014).

3 **Fostering Positive, Two-Way Communication**

Communication is the basis for relationship building. It is critical for establishing strong working relationships between parents and teachers and other staff (Epstein, 1995). Two-way communication is interactive and involves an exchange of information and ideas. Two-way communication allows early childhood providers to learn about families' preferences and concerns. Providers can also use two-way communication to show that they value parents' expertise and would like to learn more about their cultures. It lays the foundation for building trust in ongoing relationships. Two-way communication is core to family engagement.

4 **Creating Program Environments That Encourage Family Engagement**

The program environment includes the physical space and the emotional and psychological atmosphere in the program. A program's environment reflects the program's philosophy, curriculum, and the cultures and languages of the families it serves. Carefully planned program environments can help parents and other family members feel welcome and respected. Program environments that promote family engagement in these ways can help early childhood staff to facilitate children's learning, development, and well-being.

5 **Providing Peer-to-Peer Activities and Other Social Networking Opportunities**

Formal and informal peer-to-peer activities and social networking opportunities for families foster a sense of community within a program and increase families' abilities to obtain supports and resources (Dempsey & Keen, 2008). When families are a part of a social network of peers, they can share ideas and aspirations, and problem-solve together.

6 **Fostering Respect, Flexibility, and Openness to Change**

Providers' positive, respectful attitudes towards families are important to the development of high-quality (Dunst, Boyd, Trivette, & Hamby, 2002), trusting relationships (Christenson, 2004). Staff's respect, flexibility, and openness and cultural sensitivity toward families set the tone for constructive provider-family interactions.

7 **Promoting Parents' Sense of Competence**

Parents' sense of competence in their parenting roles is an important factor that can impact child outcomes (Jones & Prinz, 2005). Early childhood programs can design and develop practices and activities that honor parents' knowledge about their children and help to strengthen their sense of competence. These activities can be designed to reinforce family members' abilities to support their children's healthy development.

8 **Advocating for Families and Making Connections to Supports and Resources**

Advocating for families and supporting families to advocate for themselves while connecting them to information, supports, and resources is essential to family partnerships in high-quality settings. Supports and resources are most effective when they acknowledge families' own advocacy, focus on family strengths, and recognize families' concerns and priorities. These kinds of supports and resources also help to improve parents' confidence and well-being (Trivette, Dunst, & Hamby, 2010).

See the **Key Indicators of High-Quality Family Engagement for Quality Rating and Improvement Systems**, available on the Child Care Technical Assistance website.

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